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April 29, 2005

Mr. W. Ralph Basham
Director
United States Secret Service
245 Murray Drive, Building 410
Washington, DC 20223

Dear Mr. Basham:

We are writing you with concerns regarding the United States Secret Service policy on asking for the race of journalists and guests visiting the White House or attending events with the President or other members of the Administration and to request a copy of any policies or guidance documents you have issued implementing this practice. We are troubled by an article in today's Washington Post that reports that the Secret Service has requested the race of journalists and guests that are scheduled to attend a reception tomorrow evening with President Bush. The Washington Post also reports that this practice of asking the race of such journalists and guests has not been applied universally.¹ If these reports are correct, this behavior on the part of the Secret Service amounts to racial profiling.

We are also disturbed by additional reports that indicate other instances when the Secret Service has selectively asked for the race of journalists and guests attending White House functions. These instances include:

- In July 2004, a Bush-Cheney campaign official, on Secret Service instruction, asked for the race of an Arizona Daily Star photographer before she was allowed to photograph Vice President Cheney.²
- In September 2004, Secret Service requested that journalists covering a presidential debate disclose their race on a media credential application.³

¹Dana Milbank, *Racial Data Sought for Bush Event*, Washington Post, April 29, 2005.

²C.J. Karamargin, *Bush Camp Solicits Race of Star Staffer*, Arizona Daily Star, July 31, 2004.

³Eun-Kyung Kim, *Journalists Covering Debates Are Asked For Racial Data*, St. Louis Post - Dispatch, September 9, 2004.

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- In October 2004, Secret Service requested that journalists covering a President Bush appearance in Colorado provide their race and gender.⁴
- In March 2005, Vice President Cheney's staff requested the race and gender of the Orange County Register editorial board before the Vice President would meet with them.⁵

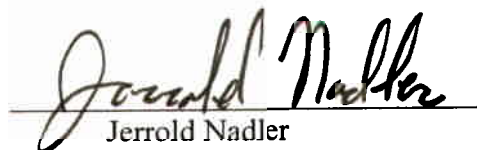
This Administration has repeatedly taken the stance that racial profiling will not be tolerated. On February 27, 2001, the President declared before a Joint Session of Congress that racial profiling "is wrong and we will end it in America." The very next day, Attorney General John Ashcroft wrote a letter asking Congress to introduce racial profiling legislation. Ranking Member Conyers responded to this request by introducing racial profiling legislation, the End Racial Profiling Act, in June 2001. In June 2003, the Justice Department unilaterally issued racial profiling guidelines that would revise the procedures for all federal law enforcement agencies. We question why an Administration, that has regularly indicated that any form of racial profiling is unacceptable, would simultaneously allow an agency to selectively ask the race of individuals that the Administration interacts with.

We would appreciate a prompt response to this document request. As the Secret Service has indicated that the agency does not and will not tolerate racial or cultural bias, we know that you can appreciate our concerns. If you have any questions regarding this request, please do not hesitate to contact Kanya Bennett with the House Judiciary Committee Democratic Staff at (202) 225-6906. Please reply to the Democratic Staff Office at 2142 Rayburn House Office Building.

Sincerely,



John Conyers, Jr.



Jerrold Nadler

cc: Hon. F. James Sensenbrenner, Jr.

⁴Dana Milbank, *Racial Data Sought for Bush Event*, Washington Post, April 29, 2005.

⁵Dena Bunis, *Behind the Scenes of VP's Visit To O.C.*, Orange County Register, March 20, 2005.